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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN EU PRESIDENCY URGES IRAN TO RETURN TO
NEGOTIATIONS

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1. In her capacity as current President of the EU Council, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik issued a statement on behalf of the EU urging Iran to return to the negotiating table. Before the June 1 "P5 1" meeting in Vienna, Plassnik met separately with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett and EU High Representative Javier Solana. Plassnik said afterwards that she hoped the international community would finalize an offer that would bring Iran back into talks on a diplomatic solution to the crisis over its nuclear program.

2. Text of the press release follows:

In the run-up to the EU-3 meeting (UK, France and Germany) with the USA, Russia and China in Vienna, Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, President of the Council, had talks on Thursday with her counterparts from the USA and the UK, Condoleezza Rice and Margaret Beckett, and High Representative Javier Solana.

"We hope it will be possible today to finalize an offer from the international community that will enable Iran to return to the negotiating table. We are all working together on a diplomatic solution," Plassnik stated.

She said the offer would contain economic and political incentives and enable Iran to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. "We have never denied Iran the right to a nuclear program that exclusively serves the purpose of generating energy. However, this requires Iran to restore the necessary basis of trust and provide convincing guarantees of the transparency and verifiability of its program. We must have absolute certainty that the Iranian nuclear program is not a weapons program," Plassnik stressed.

"Today is a day that will determine the future course of relations between the international community and Iran. I hope Iran will recognize the importance of these international efforts and respond in an open-minded, positive fashion. The international community is united on this issue. We fully support the efforts of the EU-3. Iran should grasp the hand extended to it and return to the negotiating table," she continued. "This could also facilitate the development of a perspective for the future after decades of 'non-relations' between Iran and the USA."

Plassnik concluded by remarking that the fact this important meeting had been held in Vienna once again highlighted the

role of the city as a headquarters of UN organizations, an international meeting place and a center of dialogue.

(end text)

McCaw